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Integration of Princely States After Independence

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Introduction

- The **Indian Independence Act of 1947** gave princely states an option to accede to the newly born dominions India or Pakistan or continue as an independent sovereign state.
- At that time **more than 500 princely states** have covered 48 percent of the area of pre Independent India and constituted 28% of its population.
- These kingdoms were not legally part of British India, but in reality, they were **completely subordinate to the British Crown**.
- For the British these states were the **necessary allies**, to keep in check the rise of other colonial powers and nationalist tendencies in India.
- Accordingly, the princes were given autonomy over their territories, but the British acquired for themselves the right to appoint ministers and get military support as and when required.
- **Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel** (India's first deputy prime minister and the home minister) with the assistance of **V.P menon** (the secretary of the Ministry of the States) was given the formidable task of integrating the princely states.
- From invoking the **patriotism** of the princes to remind them of the possibility of **anarchy** on event of their refusal to join, Patel kept trying to convince them to join India.
- He also introduced the concept of "**privy purses**"— a payment to be made to royal families for their agreement to merge with India.
- Bikaner, Baroda and few other states from Rajasthan were the first ones to join the union.
- There were several other states that were adamant to not join India. Some of them thought this to be the best moment to acquire **independent statehood**, while there were others who wanted to **become a part of Pakistan**.

Travancore

- The **southern Indian maritime state** was strategically placed for maritime trade and was rich in both human and mineral resources.
- It was one of the first princely states to refuse accession to the Indian union and question the Congress' leadership of the nation.
- By 1946, the Dewan of Travancore, **Sir C.P. Ramamswamy Aiyar** declared his intention of forming an independent state of Travancore that would be open to the idea of signing a treaty with the Indian union.
- Sir C.P. Aiyar is also said to have had **secret ties with the UK government** who were in support of an independent Travancore in the hope that they would get exclusive access to a mineral called monazite that the area was rich in, and would give an edge to Britain in the nuclear arms race.
- He stuck to his position till as late as July 1947. He changed his mind soon after he survived an **assassination attempt by a member of the Kerala Socialist Party**.
- On July 30 1947, Travancore joined India.

Jodhpur

- The Rajput princely state despite having a **Hindu king and a large Hindu population**, strangely had a tilt towards Pakistan.
- Young and inexperienced, Jodhpur prince, **Hanvant Singh** reckoned that he may get a better “deal” from Pakistan since his state was contiguous with the country.
- Jinnah reported to have given the Maharaja a **signed blank sheet of paper** to list all his demands.
- He also offered him free access to the **Karachi port** to arms manufacturing and importing along with military and agrarian support.
- Seeing the risks in the **border state** acceding to Pakistan, **Patel immediately contacted the prince and offered him sufficient benefits**.
- Patel assured him that importing arms would be allowed, Jodhpur would be connected to Kathiawar by rail and that India would supply grain to it during famines.
- On 11th August 1947, Maharaja Hanvant Singh, King of Jodhpur signed the **Instrument of Accession** and the State of Jodhpur was integrated into the Indian Dominion.

Bhopal

- It was another state that wished to declare independence.
- Here a **Muslim Nawab**, Hamidullah Khan, was ruling over a **majority Hindu population**.
- He was a close friend of the Muslim League and staunchly opposed the Congress rule.
- He had made clear his decision to attain independence to Mountbatten.

- However, the latter wrote back to him stating that “**no ruler could run away from the dominion closest to him**”.
- By July 1947, the Prince became aware of the large number of princes who had acceded to India and decided to join India.

Hyderabad

- It was the **largest and richest of all princely states**, covered a large portion of the Deccan plateau.
- **Nizam Mir Usman Ali** was presiding over a **largely Hindu population** in the princely state.
- He was very clear on his **demand for an independent state** and blatantly refused to join the Indian dominion.
- He drew support from Jinnah and the tussle over Hyderabad grew stronger over time.
- Both requests and threats from Patel and other mediators failed to change the mind of the Nizam, who kept expanding his army by importing arms from Europe.
- Things took a turn for the worse when armed fanatics (**called Razakars**) unleashed violence targeted at Hyderabad’s Hindu residents.
- The Congress government decided to make a more decisive turn after the Lord Mountbatten resignation in June 1948.
- On September 13, 1948, Indian troops were sent to Hyderabad under ‘**Operation Polo**’.
- In an **armed encounter** that lasted for about four days, the **Indian army gained full control of the state** and Hyderabad became the integral part of India.
- Later, in an attempt to reward the Nizam for his submission, he was made the governor of the state of Hyderabad.

Junagadh

- The princely state, situated on the **southwestern end of Gujarat**, also did not accede to the Indian union by August 15, 1947.
- It was the most important among the group of Kathiawar states and contained a **large Hindu population** ruled by the **Nawab, Muhammad Mahabat Khanji III**.
- **On September 15, 1947**, Nawab Mahabat Khanji chose to accede to Pakistan ignoring Mountbatten’s views, arguing that Junagadh adjoined Pakistan by sea.
- The rulers of two states that were subject to the suzerainty of Junagadh — **Mangrol and Babariawad** — reacted by declaring their independence from Junagadh and acceding to India.

- In response, the nawab of Junagadh militarily occupied the two states. Rulers of the other neighbouring states reacted angrily, sending troops to the Junagadh frontier, and appealed to the Government of India for assistance.
- India believed that if Junagadh was permitted to accede to Pakistan, **communal tension already simmering in Gujarat would worsen**, and refused to accept the Nawab's choice of accession.
- The government pointed out that the state was 80% Hindu, and called for a **plebiscite** to decide the question of accession.
- India **cut off supplies of fuel and coal** to Junagadh, severed air and postal links, sent troops to the frontier, and occupied the principalities of Mangrol and Babariawad that had acceded to India.
- Pakistan agreed to discuss a plebiscite, **subject to the withdrawal of Indian troops**, a condition India rejected.
- On 26 October, the Nawab and his family fled to Pakistan following clashes with Indian troops. Before leaving, the Nawab had emptied the state treasury of its cash and securities.
- On November 7, 1947 Junagadh's court, facing collapse, invited the Government of India to take over the State's administration.
- The Dewan of Junagadh, Sir Shah Nawaz Bhutto, the father of the more famous Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, decided to invite the Government of India to intervene.
- The government of India accepted the invitation of the Dewan to intervene.
- A plebiscite was conducted in February 1948, which went almost unanimously in favour of accession to India.
- Junagadh became a part of the Indian state of Saurashtra until November 1, 1956, when Saurashtra became part of Bombay state.
- In 1960, Bombay state was split into the linguistic states of Maharashtra and Gujarat, in which Junagadh was located and since then Junagadh is part of Gujarat.

Kashmir

- It was a princely state with a **Hindu king ruling over a predominant Muslim population** which had remained reluctant to join either of the two dominions.
- The case of this strategically located kingdom was not just very different but also one of the toughest as it had important international boundaries.
- The ruler of Kashmir **Maharaja Hari Singh** had **offered a proposal of standstill agreement to both India and Pakistan**, pending a final decision on the state's accession.
- **Pakistan entered into the standstill agreement but it invaded the Kashmir** from north with an army of soldiers and tribesmen carrying weapons. In the early hours of 24th October, 1947, thousands of tribal pathan swept into Kashmir.
- The Maharaja of Jammu and Kashmir appealed to India for help. He sent his representative **Sheikh Abdullah** to Delhi to ask for India's help.

- On 26th October 1947, Maharaja Hari Singh fled from Srinagar and arrived in Jammu where he signed an '**Instrument of Accession**' of J&K state.
- According to the terms of the document, the Indian jurisdiction would extend to **external affairs, communications and defence**. After the document was signed, Indian troops were airlifted into the state and fought alongside the Kashmiris.
- On 5th March, 1948, Maharaja Hari Singh announced the formation of an interim popular government with **Sheikh Mohammed Abdullah as the Prime Minister**.
- In 1951, the **state constituent assembly** was elected. It met for the first time in Srinagar on 31st October 1951.
- In 1952, the **Delhi Agreement** was signed between Prime Ministers of India and Jammu & Kashmir giving special position to the state under Indian Constitutional framework.
- On 6th february 1954, the J&K constituent assembly ratified the accession of the state to the Union of India.
- The President subsequently issued the constitution order under **Article 370** of the Constitution extending the Union Constitution to the state with some exceptions and modifications.
- As per **Section 3** of the J&K constitution, Jammu & Kashmir is and shall be an integral part of the Union of India.
- On **5th of August 2019**, the President of India promulgated the **Constitution (Application to Jammu and Kashmir) Order, 2019**.
- The order effectively **abrogates the special status accorded to Jammu and Kashmir** under the provision of Article 370 - whereby provisions of the Constitution which were applicable to other states were not applicable to Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

